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**XXXII\*. A Letter to the Secretary relating to the preceding Inscription.**  
*By Sir ALEXANDER JOHNSTON, K.N.T., V.P.R.A.S.*

SIR:

I some time ago had the honour to send you the fac-simile of an ancient inscription found at Trincomalee, on the east side of the island of Ceylon; I now have the honour to send you the fac-simile of one found at Colombo, on the west side of that island. The first is of importance, as connected with the plan which I proposed to Government, in 1806, for restoring the northern, eastern, and western provinces of Ceylon to their ancient state of agricultural improvement, by affording to the Hindu capitalists of Jaffna, and the opposite peninsula of India, such privileges and immunities as might induce them to employ their capital and their cultivators in the re-cultivation of those extensive and once highly cultivated provinces. The second is of importance, as connected with the plan which I submitted to Government also in 1806, for restoring the same provinces to their ancient state of commercial prosperity, by establishing free ports in the most convenient parts of the island, by repealing many taxes which, without being productive to Government, were peculiarly obnoxious to the Mohammedan traders of Ceylon, and by inducing the Mohammedan capitalists of the coasts of Malabar, Coromandel, and Malacca, to make Ceylon, in modern times, what it was in ancient times, the great emporium of their trade in India.

The former plan was the result of a very laborious inquiry which, with the assistance of the most learned and enlightened of the Brahmans and Hindus of Ceylon and Ramissarum, I instituted into the history of the ancient agricultural establishments of all the different tribes of Hindus on the southern peninsula of India and the island of Ceylon. The latter was the result of an equally laborious inquiry which, with the assistance of the most learned and enlightened of the Mohammedan priests and merchants, as well of Ceylon as of the coasts of Malabar, Coromandel, Malacca, and the Eastern Islands, I instituted into the history of the ancient commercial establishments of the Mohammedans on the coasts of India and Ceylon. As the latter inquiry, from the character and the nations of the different

persons whom I consulted, afforded me much curious information relative to the manner in which the trade had been carried on by the Mohammedan merchants on Ceylon, from the end of the ninth to the beginning of the fifteenth century, and as that information may serve to fill up a portion of the chasm which exists in the history of the trade of India between those two periods, I shall avail myself of the present opportunity, while explaining to you the circumstances by which I was led to the discovery of the accompanying inscription, to submit to the Royal Asiatic Society a short account of the state of the Mohammedans, and of their trade on Ceylon, from the time of their earliest establishment on that island to the present period.

The first Mohammedans who settled on Ceylon were, according to the tradition which prevails amongst their descendants, a portion of those Arabs of the house of Hashim who were driven from Arabia in the early part of the eighth century, by the tyranny of the Caliph Abd al Melek ben Merwān, and who proceeding from the Euphrates southward made settlements in the Concan, in the southern parts of the peninsula of India, on the island of Ceylon and at Malacca. The division of them which came to Ceylon formed eight considerable settlements along the north-east, north, and western coasts of that island : *viz.* one at Trincomalee, one at Jaffna, one at Mantotte and Manar, one at Coodramallé, one at Putlam, one at Colombo, one at Barbareen, and one at Point de Galle. The settlement at Manar and Mantotte, on the north-west part of Ceylon, from its local situation with respect to the peninsula of India, the two passages through Adam's bridge,\* and the chank† and pearl‡ fisheries on the coasts of Ceylon and Madura, naturally became for the Mohammedans, what it had before been for the ancient Hindu and Persian traders of India, the great emporium of all the trade which was carried on by them with Egypt, Arabia, Persia, and the coast of Malabar, on one side; and the coast of Coromandel, the eastern shores of the bay of Bengal, Malacca, Sumatra, Java, the Moluccas, and China, on the other side. On this part of Ceylon, at an equal distance from their respective countries, the silk merchants of China, who had collected on their voyage aloes, cloves, nutmegs, and sandal-wood, maintained a free and beneficial commerce with the inhabitants of the Arabian and Persian Gulfs : it was, in fact, the place at which all the goods which came

\* See the accompanying Note (A).

† See Note (B).

‡ See Note (C).

from the east were exchanged with those which came from the west. Although the Mohammedan traders who were settled on Ceylon had acquired great wealth and influence very early in the eleventh century, and although they continued to possess a most extensive and lucrative trade in its ports till the end of the fifteenth century, it was during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that they attained the highest degree of their commercial prosperity and political influence on that island. During that period, the great Mohammedan merchants of Manar and Mantotte received into the immense warehouses which they had established at this emporium the most valuable produce of the island from their subordinate agents, who resided at the different sea-ports which were situated in the neighbourhood of those provinces where the various articles of commerce were produced. From their agents at Trincomalee they received rice\* and indigo ;† from those at Jaffna, the chaya root or red dye,‡ the wood of the black palmyra tree,§ and the sea-shells called chanks; from those at Cooramallé,|| pearls; from those at Putlam, areca-nut¶ for chewing with betel leaves; ebony, satin, and calamander wood for furniture, and sappan\*\* wood for dyeing; from those at Colombo, cinnamon†† and precious stones ;‡‡ from those at Barbareen, cocoa-nut oil and coire ;§§ and from those at Point de Galle, ivory and elephants.|||

By means of armed vessels, which they maintained at their own expense near the island of Manar, they commanded the only two passages by which vessels of any size could pass through the ridge of sand-banks which extends from the southern peninsula of India to the island of Ceylon, and is known by the name of Adam's bridge. By means of the wealth which they circulated through the country, they enabled the inhabitants of the adjoining provinces to keep their tanks or reservoirs for water in a constant state of repair, and their rice fields in a constant state of cultivation. In the days of their commercial prosperity, the great tank or artificial lake within a few miles of Mantotte,¶¶ which is called the giant's tank,\*\*\* and which is now quite out of repair and completely useless, was in perfect repair, and most extensively useful; and the three

\* See Note (D).

† See Note (E).

‡ See Note (F).

§ See Note (G).

|| See Note (H).

¶ See Note (I).

\*\* See Note (K).

†† See Note (L).

‡‡ See Note (M).

§§ See Note (N).

||| See Note (O).

¶¶ See Note (P).      \*\*\* See Note (Q).

adjoining provinces of Mossele, Mantotte, and Nannetan, which are now almost a desert, were then extremely populous and most highly cultivated. By means of their different establishments in the southern peninsula of India, they introduced from thence into Ceylon, between six and seven hundred years ago, the first body of cloth-weavers that ever was settled on that island.\* By means of the intercourse which they kept up, through the Persian Gulf and Bussorah, with Bagdad and all the countries under that caliphat, on the one side, and through the Arabian Gulf and Egypt, with all the Mohammedan powers settled along the coasts of the Mediterranean, and of Spain on the other side, they introduced from those countries into Ceylon many original works in Arabic on Mohammedan law,† and many translations into Arabic of the most valuable of the Greek and Roman classics, upon medicine, science, and literature.‡ By means of the influence which they possessed with the sovereigns of Ceylon, they obtained from them the important privilege, that in the different ports in which they carried on their trade, all commercial and maritime cases in which a Mohammedan merchant, mariner, or vessel was concerned, should be tried at the port itself, without delay or expense, by a tribunal which consisted of a certain number of Mohammedan priests, merchants, and mariners, and which was bound to proceed according to a maritime code of laws which universally prevailed amongst the Asiatic Mohammedans.§

The Portuguese, on their first arrival on Ceylon at the conclusion of the fifteenth century, found that the Mohammedan traders still monopolized the whole export and import trade of the island, and that they were, from their commercial and political power in the country, the most formidable rivals whom they had to encounter. From the beginning of the sixteenth century, the trade and affluence of the Mohammedans on the island of Ceylon have been gradually, though constantly, on the decline; owing, in some degree, to the general decline of the trade and influence of the Mohammedan traders in every part of India, but more particularly to the systems of policy which have been respectively adopted by the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the English Governments of Ceylon, and to the great improvement which has been made within the last three centuries in the science of navigation.

The Mohammedan population on that island now consists of about seventy thousand persons, who are distributed in every part of the country.

\* See Note (R).

† See Note (S).

See Note (T).

§ See Note (U).

The Mohammedan traders still have establishments at Putlam, Colombo, Barbareen, and Point de Galle, from whence they carry on an export and import trade with the coasts of Malabar and Coromandel. A great many of them possess small capitals, with which they also carry on a considerable portion of the retail trade of the country, and rent from Government the several duties which are annually farmed out by the different agents of revenue. They are of the sect of Shafei. Their book of religious instruction is an abridgment of the Koran, called the Umbda, written in Arabic by a learned man from Arabia who visited Ceylon about the close of the twelfth century. The commentary on the Mohammedan law which is most in use amongst them is called the Amalí. The whole of it is written in Arabic; the text in the old Arabic of the Koran, and the notes in modern Arabic. Their laws of marriage and inheritance are a modification of the laws of marriage and inheritance which prevailed amongst the Arabs, who were subject to the Caliph of Bagdad at the time their ancestors emigrated from Arabia. Their maritime and commercial laws bear a strong resemblance both to those maritime and commercial laws which prevail amongst the Hindu maritime traders of India, and to those which prevail amongst the Malay maritime traders of Malacca and the eastern islands.

The conduct which they, as a body, invariably observed with respect to the different measures which I adopted while I was Chief Justice and President of His Majesty's Council on Ceylon, gave me a very favourable opinion of their intellectual and moral character. In 1806, when I called upon their chiefs and their priests to assist me in compiling for their use, as I had done for that of each of the other classes of inhabitants in Ceylon, a separate code of laws, founded upon their respective usages and customs, I derived the most extensive and valuable information from their local experience. In 1807, when I consulted them as to the best mode of improving the education of their countrymen, I found them not only anxious to co-operate with me on the occasion, but willing to make, at their own expense, the most liberal establishments in every part of the island, for instructing all the children of the Mohammedan religion in such branches of science and knowledge as I might think applicable to the peculiar state of society which prevailed amongst them. In 1811, when I publicly assembled them to explain the nature of the privilege of sitting upon juries, and of the other privileges which I had obtained and secured for them under the

great seal of England, by his Majesty's charter of 1810, I received from them the most useful suggestions, both as to the manner of rendering the jury system popular amongst their sect, and that of attaining the real ends of justice, without militating against any of the feelings, or even the prejudices of the people. In 1815, when on my proposal they adopted the same resolution which all the other castes on Ceylon had adopted, of declaring free all children born of their slaves after the 12th of August 1816, I had every reason to applaud the humanity and liberality of the sentiments and views, which they not only expressed but acted upon, in the progress of that important measure.

In 1806, while collecting, as I have already mentioned, the various usages and customs of the Mohammedan inhabitants of Ceylon, I directed my inquiries particularly to those customs and usages which could throw any light on the history of their early settlements and former commercial prosperity on that island, and their intimate connexion and constant communication with the Caliphs of Bagdad, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries; and I was referred by all the Mohammedan priests, merchants, and mariners, by whom I was assisted in my inquiries, to the Cufic inscription of which the accompanying is the fac-simile, as the oldest record on the island which alluded to the intercourse that had subsisted in former days between the Caliphs of Bagdad and the Mohammedans of Ceylon.

The following is the tradition which prevails on Ceylon as to this inscription. That it is supposed to be the most ancient Mohammedan inscription on the island. That the Caliph of Bagdad, in the beginning of the tenth century, hearing that the Mohammedans then established as traders at Colombo were ignorant of and inattentive to the real tenets of their religion, sent a learned and pious priest from Bagdad to Colombo, with instructions to reform the Mohammedans of that place, by explaining to them the nature of their religion, and by making such establishments, and erecting such a mosque at Colombo, as were likely to ensure for the future their strict observance of the real spirit of Mohammedan worship. That this learned and pious man, after having erected a very extensive mosque at Colombo and accomplished the object of his mission, died, and was buried at Colombo, close to the mosque he had erected. That after his death, some learned persons were sent from Bagdad to Colombo by the Caliph, for the express purpose of engraving this inscription on his tomb-stone, and that this stone had remained on his grave undis-

turbed for nearly eight hundred years, till the Dutch dessave, or collector of Colombo, about forty years ago, removed it, along with some other stones, from the Moorish burying-ground near Colombo, to the spot where he was building a house, and placed it where it now stands, as one of the steps to his house. The English translation of it was made by the Rev. Samuel Lee, A.M., professor of Arabic at Cambridge, who is so celebrated all over Europe for the profound knowledge he possesses of the Hebrew, the Arabic, and other oriental languages.

I remain, &c.

*To the Secretary of  
the Royal Asiatic Society.*

(Signed)

ALEXANDER JOHNSTON.

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#### N O T E S.

(A). One of these passages, called the Manar Passage, which separates the island of Manar from the opposite coast of Ceylon near Mantotte, is very narrow, and not above four feet deep at high water. The other, called the Paumbum Passage, separates the island of Ramissarum, celebrated throughout India for its Hindu pagoda, from the opposite coast of the peninsula of India near Tonitorré Point: it is also very narrow, and not above six feet deep at high water. The importance of the first of these passages arises from its being the passage through which all the small vessels trading between the south-west and north-west ports of Ceylon must pass; the importance of the latter arises from its being the passage through which all the small vessels trading between the coast of Malabar and the coast of Coromandel must pass. From the information which I collected during frequent visits which I paid to the islands of Ramissarum and Manar, I ascertained beyond a doubt that both these passages had been much deeper in ancient times, and that they might again be made deeper without much difficulty. The deepening of these two passages is an object of considerable importance to navigation, and is well worthy of the attention of his Majesty's Ministers and of the Court of Directors of the Honourable East-India Company.

(B). The chank is the *voluta gravis*. The principal chank banks belonging to the English Government on Ceylon are situated along the north-west coast of Ceylon, a little to the northward of the island of Manar. The divers generally dive for these shells in three or three and a half fathoms water. The quantity of chank shells which are found on these banks is so great, that the government frequently lets the right of fishing for them for one year for sixty thousand Ceylon dollars. Numbers of these shells are exported from Ceylon to every part of India, but more particularly to Bengal, where they are sawed into rings of different sizes, and worn by the Indian women as an ornament, on their arms, legs, toes, and fingers. As the Hindu natives of India have a religious prejudice in their favour, they are also used in the Hindu

temples and at the Hindu festivals. If any of the reversed variety of these shells are found with the opening on the left instead of on the right side of the shell, they may, it is said, in consequence of a peculiar religious prejudice in favour of such variety amongst the Hindus, be sold at any Hindu temple for their weight in gold. As the Ceylon divers learn to dive for pearl oysters, which are found in eight or nine fathoms water, by diving for the chanks which are found in three or four fathoms, the chank fishery is considered a nursery for the pearl divers.

(C). The principal pearl banks belonging to His Majesty's Government are situated along the western coast of Ceylon, a little to the southward of the island of Manar. The East-India Company have a chank fishery at Killecarré, and a pearl fishery at Tunicoreen, both which places are situated on that part of the coast of the southern peninsula of India which is opposite to the island of Ceylon. It is said that the chank and pearl fisheries on the coast of the peninsula and the chank and pearl fisheries on the coast of Ceylon were, at the time when the Mohammedans were established at Manar and Mantotte, under one management: the policy of this arrangement is obvious, for as most of the divers who dive on the one bank also dive on the other, the fisheries at one place may, if under separate management, materially interfere with the fisheries on the other. These fisheries seem to have been carried on along the same parts of the respective coasts of the peninsula of India and of Ceylon from the most ancient times, as I ascertained in the course of an examination which I made of the coast near Killecarré. I have little doubt that Killecarré was, as is stated by some authors, the Colchis mentioned in the Periplus of the Erythrean sea, and that the pearl fishery which is mentioned in the Periplus as having been carried on at Colchis in ancient times, is the same pearl fishery as that which is now carried on off the coast of Tunicoreen and Killekarré.

(D). The great quantities of rice which in former days were exported from Trincomalée to all parts of India were the produce of the eastern provinces of Ceylon, the produce of which is at the present time so reduced as to be scarcely sufficient to supply the small population which inhabits them. By a report made to me in 1806, it appeared that there were at that time in those provinces upwards of six hundred tanks or reservoirs of water in a state of complete ruin, two of which, Minere and Kandelle, are of immense dimensions, the former being about twenty miles, the latter about sixteen miles in circumference. At the former, the embankment which keeps in the water is a quarter of a mile long, and about sixty feet wide at its top; at the latter, in order to encompass and keep in the water of the lake, two hills are joined by an embankment the length of which is one mile and a quarter, its perpendicular height about twenty feet, its breadth at the base one hundred and fifty feet, and at the summit about thirty feet.

(E). The indigo which was exported from Trincomalée is the produce of the *indigofera tinctoria* of Linnæus. It was celebrated in ancient times all over India, Arabia, and Persia, for the brightness of its colour, and was an article upon which the merchants of Ceylon in former days appear to have made a great profit; it grows at present perfectly wild between Trincomalée and Batticaloa, but is no longer an article of export. As his Majesty's Government at my suggestion, in the year 1810, took off the restrictions which previously existed against Europeans holding lands on the island of Ceylon, a gentleman is now about to apply to Government for a grant of land in that part of the country where the *indigofera*

*tinctoria* grows wild, and to employ a very considerable capital in the cultivation and preparation of indigo: it is stated that he intends to take with him the improved machinery which has been recently invented for the manufacture of that valuable dye. The state of machinery on Ceylon is very defective in every branch. In order to enable both the theoretical and practical mechanics of England to form some idea of the improvements which might be made in it, I collected a very complete set of working models of every machine and instrument in use amongst the natives of Ceylon, either in agriculture or manufactures, but this collection was unfortunately lost in the *Lady Jane Dundas* East-Indiaman, in 1809. I have however recently called the attention of Dr. Birkbeck, and other scientific members of the Mechanics Institution in London, to the state of machinery on Ceylon, and to the degree of improvement which it is capable of receiving from the superior knowledge of the mechanics of this country, and I trust that the Royal Asiatic Society will soon receive the report which Dr. Birkbeck is expected to make on this interesting subject.

(F). The chayà root is the *oldenlandia umbellata* of Linnæus, and is used for dyeing red, orange, and purple. Although this root grows on the opposite coasts and on the island of Ramissarum, that which grows in the province of Jaffna and on the island of Manar is reckoned the finest. It gives rise, in Jaffna and on the island of Manar, to a caste whose sole occupation is to dig for chayà root.

(G). The palmyra of the province of Jaffna is the *borassus flabelliformis* of Linnæus. This palm grows to great perfection in that province. The species of borassus in Jaffna which is so valuable is that of which the wood is almost quite black; it is used all over India for rafters and for the roofs of houses, and is peculiarly valuable from its resisting all insects and being extremely durable. The borassus, independent of its supplying this valuable wood for exportation, is of the greatest importance to the inhabitants of Jaffna, from its fruit and roots being used by them for food, and from many other parts of it being used by them in manufactures and as articles of trade. The cocoa-nut tree, or *cocos nucifera*, is as useful to the natives in the south as the borassus flabelliformis is to the natives of the north of Ceylon; and it is worthy of remark, that although there are forests of the borassus in the north of the island, there are scarcely any of the *cocos nucifera*; and that although there are forests of the *cocos nucifera* in the south of the island, there is hardly a tree of the *borassus flabelliformis*.

(H). Cooramallé was in ancient times a town of considerable importance. There are now extensive ruins on the spot where it formerly stood. In 1808, when I examined them, I found the remains of many very large buildings. A history which I possess of a queen who reigned over that town and the adjacent country about eighteen hundred or two thousand years ago, shews that it was at that time a place of great importance. It was the spot where the fishery for pearls used to be carried on before it was removed to Aripoe, which is a few miles to the northward of it.

(I). The areca-nut is the *areca catechu* of Linnæus. This nut is used all over India for chewing with the betel leaf or the *betle pfeffer* of Wildenow. There are three species of this nut on Ceylon, which grow in great perfection in the interior of the country, and are much esteemed throughout India. The areca-nut is to this day one of the most profitable and most abundant articles of exportation from that island.

(K). The sappan wood is made use of for dyeing cotton cloth of a fine red, or rather a very deep orange colour; it is the *caesalpinia sappan* of Linnæus, and grows spontaneously in many parts of Ceylon.

(L). The cinnamon generally grows in the south-west part of the maritime provinces and in the interior of Ceylon. In the maritime provinces the cultivation and preparation of the cinnamon are carried on by a particular caste, which consists of between twenty-four and twenty-five thousand persons, who are said to be descended from seven weavers that were introduced into Ceylon by a Mohammedan merchant of the town of Barbareen, about the end of the twelfth or beginning of the thirteenth century. See Note (R.)

(M). The gems for which Ceylon is celebrated are found, it is believed, in granitic rock. The right of digging for them is farmed out by government, in different farms, and in different parts of the island.

(N). The coarse filament of the cocoa-nut husk called coire is used throughout India for rope. On Ceylon it is obtained from the cocoa-nut trees, which grow in great luxuriance along the south-west part of the coast from the river Kymel to the river Walleway, forming a belt one hundred and thirty miles in length, and one and a half in breadth. This belt was estimated, in the time when the Dutch governed Ceylon, to contain between ten and eleven millions of cocoa-nut trees, and to produce in addition to a great quantity of cocoa-nut oil and six thousand leaguers of arrack, upwards of three millions of pounds weight of coire. A good tree in that belt was estimated to produce from fifty to eighty, and sometimes one hundred cocoa-nuts in a year, each cocoa-nut being equivalent as food to at least three ounces of rice.

(O). All the elephants which were exported from Point de Galle were caught in ancient, as well as in modern times, in that tract of country which extends from Matura to Tangalle, in the south of Ceylon, and which, from its being famous for its elephants in his days, is described by Ptolemy in the map he made of Ceylon sixteen hundred years ago as the *elephantum pascua*. The trade in elephants from Ceylon, which used to be lucrative, is now completely annihilated, in consequence of all the petty Rajahs, Poligars, and other chiefs in the southern peninsula of India, who used formerly to purchase Ceylon elephants as a part of their state, having lost their sovereignties, and being therefore no longer required to keep up any state of this description. A gentleman who has a coffee plantation at Candy, it is understood, recently introduced the use of elephants in ploughing with great advantage. The number of elephants on Ceylon is so great and the population so small, that it will be of material assistance to the cultivators and manufacturers in the island if these animals can be generally used for labour.

(P). The ruins of the ancient town of Mantotte, all of which consist of brick, still cover a considerable extent of country. Great numbers of Roman coins of different emperors, particularly of the Antonines; specimens of the finest pottery, and some Roman gold and silver chains, have been found in those ruins.

(Q). The giant's tank, or the great artificial lake called Cattocarée, is the largest tank in the north-west part of the island, and is situated within a few miles of the ruins of the great town of

Mantotte. It appears by the report made to me in 1806, while I was on the spot collecting information for the purpose of having it repaired, that if put into repair it would irrigate lands sufficient for the production of one million of parrahs of paddy, each parrah containing forty-four English pounds weight of rice.

(R). I have a copy in my possession of a very curious and very ancient grant in copper, made by one of the Cingalese kings of Ceylon, about six or seven hundred years ago, to a great Mohammedan merchant who was then residing at Barbareen, and to his descendants for ever, of certain privileges and immunities in consequence of his having introduced from the opposite coast of India the first weavers of cloth who were ever established on Ceylon. By virtue of this grant, the lineal descendants of that merchant now enjoy under the British Government a portion of the privileges which were granted to their ancestors by the ancient Cingalese government of the country, and which were successively confirmed to them by the Portuguese, Dutch, and English Governments on Ceylon. The chief of this family was appointed by me, in 1806, native superintendent of the medical department, under the control of the Supreme Court. He was considered by the natives of the country as one of the best informed of the native physicians on the island, and possessed one of the best collections of native medical books, most of which had been in his family between seven and eight hundred years, during the whole of which period it had been customary for one member of his family at least to follow the medical profession. This same person made me a very detailed report of all the plants on Ceylon which have been used from time immemorial for medical purposes by Mohammedan native physicians on that island. The cultivation and improvement of these plants, as well as of all other plants and vegetables on the island which might be used either for food or commercial purposes, was one of the great objects for which his Majesty's Government, at my suggestion, in 1810, established a royal botanical garden in Ceylon.

(S). While investigating questions relative to the laws of marriage and inheritance between the Mohammedans of Ceylon, I have frequently been referred by them for my guidance to notes which they possessed, of decisions given in similar cases by the cadies of Bagdad and Cordova, which decisions had been observed as law amongst the Mohammedans of Ceylon for seven or eight hundred years.

(T). One of the principal Arabic works on medicine which they introduced into Ceylon was the work of Avicenna; they also introduced Arabic translations of Aristotle, Plato, Euclid, Galen, and Ptolemy, extracts of which were frequently brought to me while I was on Ceylon by the Mohammedan priests and merchants, who stated that the works themselves had originally been procured from Bagdad by their ancestors, and had remained for some hundred years in their respective families in Ceylon, but had subsequently been sold by them, when in distress, for considerable sums of money, to some merchants who traded between Ceylon and the eastern islands. Three very large volumes of extracts from the works to which I have alluded were presented to me by a Mohammedan priest of great celebrity in Asia, who died about twenty years ago on the island of Ceylon. These three volumes, together with between five and six hundred books in the Cingalese, Pali, Tamul, and Sanscrit languages, relating to the history, religion, manners, and literature of the Cingalese, Hindu, and Mohammedan inhabitants of Ceylon, which

I had collected at a considerable expense, were lost in 1809, in the *Lady Jane Dundas* East-Indiaman, on board of which ship I had taken my passage for England.

(U). The maritime laws and usages which prevail amongst the Hindu and Mohammedan mariners and traders who frequent Ceylon, of which I made a complete collection while presiding in the Vice Admiralty Court of that island, may be classed under four heads: First, those which prevail amongst the Hindu mariners and traders who carry on trade in small vessels between the coasts of Malabar, Coromandel, and the island of Ceylon; secondly, those which prevail amongst the Mohammedan mariners and traders of Arab descent who carry on trade in small vessels between the coasts of Malabar, Coromandel, and the island of Ceylon; thirdly, those which prevail amongst the Arab mariners and traders who carry on trade in very large vessels between the eastern coasts of Africa, Arabia, the Persian Gulf, and the island of Ceylon; fourthly, those which prevail amongst the Malay mariners and traders who carry on trade between the coast of Malacca, the eastern islands, and Ceylon.

The first are in some degree modified by the tenets of the Hindu religion and by Hindu law. The second, the third, and the fourth, are modified in a great degree by the tenets of the Mohammedan religion, and by Mohammedan law.